



Report of the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services

Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel – 11 October 2022

OVERVIEW OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES IN SWANSEA

Purpose	To provide an overview of key priorities and challenges and to present the Child and Family Services monthly performance report for August 2022.
Content	<p>This report includes highlights against Welsh Government, Care Inspectorate Wales and local indicators. The information covers an overview of Child and Family Services across the continuum of need and also includes the Family Support Service, Fostering Service, the Regional Adoption Service and the Youth Justice Service.</p> <p>Alongside current performance information and data, this report provides an overview of the priority improvement areas that are being taken forward by CFS during 2022/23.</p>
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the report as part of their routine review of performance and improvement in Child and Family Services.
Lead Councillor(s)	Cllr Louise Gibbard, Cabinet Member for Care Services
Lead Officer(s)	<p>David Howes, Director of Social Services</p> <p>Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services</p>
Report Author	<p>Julie Davies, Head of Child and Family Services 01792 633812 Julie.davies10@swansea.gov.uk</p>

1. Current performance across Child and Family Services

- 1.1 The qualitative and quantitative content of the monthly report continues to be added to and refined since the introduction of WCCIS. As can be seen from the August report, there are areas that continue to be developed so that a full picture across the whole service and continuum of need is able to be provided.
- 1.2 Capability charts have been added by the Learning and Innovation team which are helpful management tools from both an operational and strategic level. These show demand against predicted highs and lows, and prompt timely discussions about use of resources where there are changes in anticipated or expected demand.
- 1.3 The service continues to deliver its statutory requirements despite the immense pressures being faced, in particular social worker recruitment difficulties and the lack of suitable placements for looked after children and care leavers:
 - children are being seen on time
 - more assessments are being completed in timescale
 - timely safeguarding responses are being provided
 - reviews of statutory plans are taking place when they need to
- 1.4 Key highlights from the August report:
 - More children and families are being supported through early help.
 - There are less children on the child protection register compared to the same time last year.
 - The number of looked after children has remained in the low 480s for some time, which is lower than 12 months ago.
 - Multi-agency reviews evidence good compliance with practice standards.
 - Staff are more consistently receiving regular supervision and support.

2. Improvement priorities for Child and Family Services

- 2.1 Swansea Child and Family Services is facing a number of challenges and pressures on its road to recovery post-pandemic. These are not dissimilar to those faced in other Local Authorities – increase in and different types of demand; social work recruitment crisis; the expectations from Welsh Government as articulated in their programme for change, and more recently the impact of the cost of living crisis on our vulnerable children, young people and their families and carers.
- 2.2 The improvement priorities for the service are focused on three critical areas, with more detail provided below on key actions to deliver the necessary change:
 - Prevention and early intervention
 - Placement sufficiency
 - Workforce
- 2.3 Targeted support is being developed via the Early Help Hubs to support parents and carers in relation to parental conflict and also understanding and responding to neurodiversity. Parental advocacy is also being developed both at a local and

regional level to help parents engage with Child and Family Services and understand how they can better support and parent their children.

- 2.4 The youth service, through the 5 Early Help Hubs, is responding to the changes in demand from young people in how best to engage with them in their communities and will be offering an expanded and responsive service across Swansea. There is also work planned to co-produce a consistent response in relation to carer's assessments, use of direct payments and support for young carers.
- 2.5 There are a range of actions being developed or underway to ensure the Local Authority is able to meet its sufficiency duty, along with enabling stability in placements to avoid children and young people needing to move on:
- Targeted recruitment of foster carers (adolescents, parent and child) and creating a therapeutic hub in the fostering team to support the retention of foster carers.
 - Creating a new regional model of care for complex young people (including step down from and preventing the need for secure accommodation) through the Regional Partnership Board.
 - Exploring the setting up of new provision with providers who are confident they can work with the Welsh Government expectations, so that children and young people are able to remain living in Swansea.
 - Expanding the local and regional supported accommodation for young people aged 16+ (including unaccompanied asylum seeking children) with existing local and new providers.
 - Growing at pace the in-house residential provision with the aim of having 4 homes. One existing home (Ty Nant), the purchase of two properties to convert to children's homes (one was acquired earlier in 2022) and repurposing a former Council home and registering as emergency provision (CIW registration process for this is almost complete).
- 2.6 Our workforce is our greatest asset and the strategy for Child and Family Services is one of nurturing and developing staff at all levels across the service, along with growing our workforce of the future and offering opportunities for professional development:
- Create and recruit more alternatively qualified staff to support the social work teams.
 - Supporting the All-Wales approach and drive to managing social worker recruitment agencies.
 - Increasing the number of CFS staff recruited to the OU social work course to 11 in 2022.
 - Implementing the social work academy to nurture and develop newly qualified social workers.
 - Planning for the future by developing a whole service career progression pathway encompassing role profiling, qualifications and training in a 3 to 5 year plan.
 - Developing a reward and recognition scheme with and for staff building on the well-being strategy.